

[The Life of David Morin]

Maine

Living Lore

Old [Town?] - [7?]

(The Life of David Morin, French Canadian)

(As told by himself to Robert F. Grady)

Dave: "I worked out in Salem only six months. If you had it down two years, you made a mistake: It was just six months. It wasn't only me - the whole family went. It was right after the sawmill shut down in the fall, and we all came back in the spring. If we hadn't rented our house for the winter we would all have come right back. We had the winter's wood in the shed, and we sold that to the family that rented the house. My father was a stone mason and he couldn't find any work in Salem. He came back here with Ovide and Lawrence, and they all went up in the woods.

"That was quite a big cotton mill in Salem where I worked. It burned down some years ago, but they built it up again on the old foundations. I think there were three cotton mills there then. There was about one thousand people worked in [that?] mill where I learned to weave, and they were nearly all French. A lot of them couldn't speak English, and lots of the times the boss came around to get me to tell somebody something in English. They run all the way from one to four looms - it depended on how much experience [they?] had. I run two looms. What they made in that mill was wide sheeting. I wasn't married then - I was only eighteen. If you go down to Salem you can still see that mill. I was back there just once since I left. My brother was going down in the car, and he took me with him. I stayed

Library of Congress

at my sisters a few days down there. (Mr. Morin was rather vague in regard to that mill in Salem. He couldn't remember, for instance, what type of looms were used.)

"When I came back to Old Town in the spring, I went up on the boom for fifty cents a day - including board - and I worked there all summer. That fall I had a chance to go up in the woods for \$13.00 a month, but my father says, 'No, don't you take that: you can do better than that around here.' I got a job in the box mill that winter, and I worked there until I got that job for my brother in the [pool?] room.

8

"Superstitions? Pooh! I haven't any of those. I've heard some of those common [?], but they don't bother me. My knife dropped and stuck in the floor the other day, and I says to my wife, 'Some one's comin' to see us,' but I said that only for a joke - I didn't believe it.

"There was something happened to me in the box mill [?], though, that's as true as I'm standing here. (He got to his feet temporarily) I run a planer there, and you know how fast the belt goes on that machine. There was some beams overhead, and there was a plank between two of them over the belt. We had to get up on that plank when we oiled the upper pulley. I got up there one day with the oil can, and I had just got my foot on that plank when I heard the words 'Go Back!' The machines were makin' a lot of noise, and they were runnin' around and singin' and hollerin' down below, but there was nobody near enough so that I could hear the words as plain as I had heard those, even if they had spoken them. I got down off that plank, and happened to look up when I was puttin' back the oil can, and I saw the other end of the plank was just hanging on the edge of the beam. If I had walked out there, when I got to the middle of the plank it would have sagged just enough to slip off the beam. I would have gone right into that belt, and you can imagine what that would do to anybody. Who spoke those [workd?]? It was nobody that worked in the box mill. You can't tell me that death is the end, for I know better. There is a lot that we don't [see?].

Library of Congress

“Of course I've had some ambitions, but they were never very big ones. I never wanted much money - two or three thousand was all I ever wanted. I wanted to own my house and to educate my children. I wanted them to have a better chance than us, and they've had it. I've done about all that I set out to do, but a man's ambition is never dead. There is always something he looks forward to.